

Oxford Pedestrians Association



OXFORD PEDESTRIANS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO 51

MAY/JUNE 2003

Welcome to Issue number 51 of OxPA's Newsletter! Apologies that due to an overlooked technical hitch the last Newsletter did not have its correct and usual heading.

The new re-surfacing of Cornmarket is currently underway. Again pedestrians in the city centre are exposed to loud noise and narrow funnels whilst one road surface is removed and another laid. It would be worth it if the end result was a real pedestrian surface from shop-front to shop-front, clearly giving walkers priority. But as long as the highway surface has paving at the sides and a different surface in the middle, the effect is of a road. As OxPA has pointed out vis-a-vis Broad Street; research shows that without clearly defined roadways drivers feel like 'guests' in a pedestrian zone and drive more slowly and considerately. Therefore we continue to argue for benches and perhaps trees on Cornmarket; a pedestrianised street should ideally look welcoming to walkers and off-putting to drivers, not the other way round!

1) Regarding the High Court challenge by Transport 2000 and the Slower Speeds Initiative over Government guidelines on speed cameras (see last Newsletter); the result was a triumph for the challengers. A statement was agreed between campaigners and the Government establishing that individual police forces could apply for exemption from the official guidance. (Official guidance states that all fixed cameras in speed camera partnership areas should be yellow and conspicuously sited.) If cameras are grey and cannot be seen in advance drivers are more likely to stay within the speed limit at all times. Currently 33 out of 51 Police Authorities in Britain are part of the scheme. In the pilot areas cameras have reduced the numbers of people killed and seriously injured by over 30%.

2) The perennial issue of pavement cyclists. Following the 1999 ruling giving the police powers to fine pavement mis-users, police in Oxford agreed to stop 'reckless cyclists' on pavements. In reality they are too busy to do so. Because the roads are made so unsafe by fast and heavy traffic, parents teach their young children to cycle on the pavements, where they quickly learn to bomb along with their heads down. Unless checked, they become the teenagers and young adults we see heedlessly zipping along all pavements, even ones with a cycle lane next to them. If parents had to teach their four-year-olds to cycle on roads, would we have slower speeds, or more dead children? This problem remains unresolved, but what is clear to OxPA is that pavements are for pedestrians, and if children are taught to cycle on them whilst young they need to know to go slowly and give way to walkers, and to move onto the road as soon as they are old enough, which is well before they are teenagers! Jill is continuing to pursue police on the issue. Meanwhile here is a list of police officers to contact for each area. Dial Oxford 266000, and ask for: City Centre - Inspector CRAIK; North and South Oxford (west of the Cherwell) - Inspector PRICE; North Cowley (Marston, Barton, Wood Farm) - Inspector CARVER; East Oxford (Cowley Road and St Clements) - Acting Inspector WRIGHT; Rose Hill and Iffley - Inspector TARRANT; Blackbird Leys - Inspector BLAKE.



3) **Health Walks** representatives David Little and Andrew Fenton came to talk to OxPA's April meeting. 'Health Walks' are aimed at people who are unused to walking more than half a mile and would benefit from regular exercise. The idea is that people should be able to get to the start of a walk easily as it will be locally based. **Areas currently targeted are: East Oxford, Barton, Blackbird Leys and Rosehill.** Each walk needs a leader and a person at the back. Training is available to local people who wish to take on these voluntary roles. Roads off the beaten track with the best possible surfaces will be selected. The scheme has funding for 18 months, the idea being that this is enough time to get local schemes up and running themselves. **Community Walk Leaders are needed for this 'Walk Space' initiative. If interested please contact Andrew Fenton, Oxford City Primary Care Trust; (01865) 226831 or andrew.fenton@oxfordcity-pct.nhs.uk, or Tara Stewart of 'Fusion' (01865) 245735.**

Where there is a lot of enthusiasm in an area outside of the target ones, and people available to volunteer, 'Walk Space' partnership may be able to offer support setting it up.

4) **When Oxfordshire County Council purchased the old prison site on New Road from the Home Office it was said to be 'for the people of Oxford'.** However following recent changes to the development proposals, which were on the whole supported by our Councils, **there is now to be no pedestrian access across the site.** Only those wealthy enough to use the Health Club, hotel and restaurants will be expected to walk onto the site. **A special piece of public space, free of traffic and in the centre of Oxford, is thus effectively to be privatised.**

5) 'Brake', a road safety charity, have informed OxPA that 'Road Safety Week' ('Week?' Why not all the time?) starts on September 22nd this year, which is European Car Free Day. The theme this year is 'child pedestrian safety' so OxPA is thinking about having a child oriented car-free celebration on that day.

6) **Whilst ROX is busy trying to increase car parking in our City Centre, there is a desperate need for more on-road bicycle parking.** What there is, is woefully inadequate, so that pavements are piled with cycles which have nowhere else to go. Often when cycle parking is put in, it is in the form of a heavy metal frame on the pavement, which impedes pedestrians and often has more bikes leaning on it than actually fit. **At least three times the amount of on-road cycle parking than at present is needed in Oxford.**

7) **The good news is that in addition to our lovely bags and t-shirts which we have for sale, sporting our logo, we now also have aprons and tea towels.** If you are interested please contact Corinne (details at end of Newsletter) or log onto our website address which is; www.oxpa.org.uk

Our next two meetings are on Tuesdays May 20th and June 17th, at 7pm in Oxford Town Hall. Please note that meetings are now on a Tuesday. Please come, and bring a friend. Everyone is welcome!

Contact numbers

Sushila Dhall (Newsletter Editor).....553415

Corinne Grimley-Evans (Representative at External Meetings).....779663

Jill Haas (Back-up and Press Officer)....766368

Ray Jones (Membership Secretary and Treasurer).....865070

Patrick Lingwood (Technical Advisor).....553415

Michaela Philbin (Minutes and Stalls).....201541

National Pedestrian Association (Living Streets)..... 0207 820 1010